

# Beowulf

## XIII

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MANY at morning, as men have told me,  
warriors gathered the gift-hall round,  
folk-leaders faring from far and near,  
o'er wide-stretched ways, the wonder to view,  
trace of the traitor. Not troublous seemed  
the enemy's end to any man  
who saw by the gait of the graceless foe  
how the weary-hearted, away from thence,  
baffled in battle and banned, his steps  
death-marked dragged to the devils' mere.  
Bloody the billows were boiling there,  
turbid the tide of tumbling waves  
horribly seething, with sword-blood hot,  
by that doomed one dyed, who in den of the moor  
laid forlorn his life adown,  
his heathen soul,-and hell received it.

Home then rode the hoary clansmen  
from that merry journey, and many a youth,  
on horses white, the hardy warriors,  
back from the mere. Then Beowulf's glory  
eager they echoed, and all averred  
that from sea to sea, or south or north,  
there was no other in earth's domain,  
under vault of heaven, more valiant found,  
of warriors none more worthy to rule!  
(On their lord beloved they laid no slight,  
gracious Hrothgar: a good king he!)

From time to time, the tried-in-battle  
their gray steeds set to gallop amain,  
and ran a race when the road seemed fair.  
From time to time, a thane of the king,  
who had made many vaunts, and was mindful of verses,  
stored with sagas and songs of old,  
bound word to word in well-knit rime,  
welded his lay; this warrior soon  
of Beowulf's quest right cleverly sang,  
and artfully added an excellent tale,  
in well-ranged words, of the warlike deeds  
he had heard in saga of Sigemund.  
Strange the story: he said it all, --  
the Waelsing's wanderings wide, his struggles,

which never were told to tribes of men,  
the feuds and the frauds, save to Fitela only,  
when of these doings he deigned to speak,  
    uncle to nephew; as ever the twain  
        stood side by side in stress of war,  
        and multitude of the monster kind  
they had felled with their swords. Of Sigemund grew,  
    when he passed from life, no little praise;  
        for the doughty-in-combat a dragon killed  
that herded the hoard: [footnote 1] under hoary rock  
    the atheling dared the deed alone  
        fearful quest, nor was Fitela there.  
    Yet so it befell, his falchion pierced  
    that wondrous worm, -- on the wall it struck,  
        best blade; the dragon died in its blood.  
    Thus had the dread-one by daring achieved  
        over the ring-hoard to rule at will,  
        himself to pleasure; a sea-boat he loaded,  
        and bore on its bosom the beaming gold,  
        son of Waels; the worm was consumed.  
    He had of all heroes the highest renown  
    among races of men, this refuge-of-warriors,  
        for deeds of daring that decked his name  
        since the hand and heart of Heremod  
        grew slack in battle. He, swiftly banished  
        to mingle with monsters at mercy of foes,  
        to death was betrayed; for torrents of sorrow  
        had lamed him too long; a load of care  
        to earls and athelings all he proved.  
    Oft indeed, in earlier days,  
    for the warrior's wayfaring wise men mourned,  
    who had hoped of him help from harm and bale,  
    and had thought their sovran's son would thrive,  
        follow his father, his folk protect,  
        the hoard and the stronghold, heroes' land,  
        home of Scyldings. -- But here, thanes said,  
        the kinsman of Hygelac kinder seemed  
    to all: the other [footnote 2] was urged to crime!

And afresh to the race, [footnote 3] the fallow roads  
    by swift steeds measured! The morning sun  
        was climbing higher. Clansmen hastened  
        to the high-built hall, those hardy-minded,  
        the wonder to witness. Warden of treasure,  
        crowned with glory, the king himself,  
    with stately band from the bride-bower strode;

and with him the queen and her crowd of maidens  
measured the path to the mead-house fair.

**Footnotes.**

**1.**

"Guarded the treasure."

**2.**

Sc. Heremod.

**3.**

The singer has sung his lays, and the epic resumes its story. The time-relations are not altogether good in this long passage which describes the rejoicings of "the day after"; but the present shift from the riders on the road to the folk at the hall is not very violent, and is of a piece with the general style.